

# Exhibit 54



## Permanent Observer Mission of The State of Palestine to the United Nations New York

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### Statement by H.E. Minister Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, Security Council open high- level video conference on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 27 May 2020

27 MAY 2020 BY PALESTINE AT THE UN

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to thank the Estonian Presidency for convening this important high-level debate and for placing at the center of its Presidency the lessons of the Second World War, which served as the foundations for the establishment of the multilateral rules-based order. At a time when this order is threatened, it is important to remember why it was built and what the alternative would be.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report and for his central role in helping preserve this order at this critical juncture, including when it comes to the defense of international law and the protection of civilians.

Mr. President,

I must address the situation of the Palestinian people, which OCHA characterizes *"as a protracted protection crisis driven by lack of respect for international law, and a lack of accountability for violations"*, and let me do so by stating some hard truths.

1. There is no right to security of the occupying Power at the expense of the security and protection of the occupied people, or at the expense of a people's right to self-determination. There is no right to security that justifies permanent occupation or the illegal acquisition of land by force and its colonization. There is no right to security that justifies a blockade imposed on two million people for 13 years and the oppression of an entire nation. International law draws a clear line between legal action and war crimes and crimes against humanity. Allowing any country to blur this line places civilians in harm's way and undermines peace and security.
2. Are the Palestinian people entitled to the protections availed by the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, international human rights law? The answer must be yes. Is anyone under the illusion that Israel, the occupying Power, has any respect for its obligations under these instruments? Israel has demonstrated time and time again its contempt for the rule of international law and for Palestinian rights and lives. Can

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2. Are the Palestinian people entitled to the protections availed by the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, international human rights law? The answer must be yes. Is anyone under the illusion that Israel, the occupying Power, has any respect for its obligations under these instruments? Israel has demonstrated time and time again its contempt for the rule of international law and for Palestinian rights and lives. Can one rely on Israeli courts to ensure the occupied people of the protections they are entitled to? The Israeli NGO B'Tselem, explaining its decision to no longer cooperate with the military law enforcement system, stated that it reached *"the realization that there is no longer any point in pursuing justice and defending human rights by working with a system whose real function is measured by its ability to continue to successfully cover up unlawful acts and protect perpetrators"*. So Israel cannot be trusted to ensure accountability for violations planned at the highest level and perpetrated with the virtual guarantee of total immunity.
3. The ICC was established to fill the gap left when national courts are unwilling or unable to hold perpetrators of grave crimes accountable and fail to deliver justice. The situation in Palestine corresponds exactly to this reality. Attacks and threats against the Court for fulfilling its mandate are intolerable and should be strongly rejected. The efforts to prevent the Court from exercising its jurisdiction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory aim at effectively denying Palestinian victims – millions of civilians – any avenue for justice while guaranteeing to Israel that there will be no accountability for its crimes, thus enabling their recurrence.
4. While some misguidedly state that Israel suffers from being singled-out in the UN, the reality is that Israeli exceptionalism, which has effectively guaranteed its total impunity for actions deemed as grave violations of the law by the international community, is the main reason for the perpetuation of its violations and crimes.
5. The Security Council and the General Assembly have called for international protection of the Palestinian people, and the Secretary-General made concrete recommendations in this regard in his report of 14 August 2018, and yet the Palestinian people continue to be denied this most elementary right, as the occupying Power has granted itself veto power over any effective action to provide protection for the Palestinian civilian population. The international community cannot continue tolerating this situation.
6. Now with the threat of further unlawful annexation looming, and as existing violations and crimes against the Palestinian people continue unabated, the price of impunity continues rising, and the Palestinian people continue paying it. This must change. The cost of occupation should fall on the occupying Power, not the occupied people, and only when this cost outweighs the benefits of occupation, will Israel be compelled to respect the law and work for peace.
7. The fate of the Palestinian people cannot be left to the mercy of the occupying Power. The international community cannot abdicate its obligations, especially as Israel systematically breaches its own. We call on the Council to fulfill its mandate under the Charter, and we call on all States that believe in the rule of international law, to uphold the law in a situation where its breach has been condemned and yet tolerated for too long, prolonging this illegal Israeli military occupation and its crimes against our people and preventing the achievement of peace. Third parties have the obligation to respect and ensure respect for international law, including by not recognizing the situation created by illegal actions, not rendering aid or assistance in maintaining the illegal situation, and by holding the State, entities, companies and individuals responsible for such violations accountable.

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Mr. President

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Mr. President,

In his report on protection of civilians in armed conflict, the Secretary-General identifies respect for the law and accountability for serious violations as the two most pressing challenges to strengthening the protection of civilians. He rightly notes that the normative framework and the tools to uphold it already exist. What is needed is the political will to use these tools to enforce the law. The international community displaying such political will not only help end the prolonged suffering of the Palestinian people, but will also help achieve peace in our region and beyond. Impunity is the enemy of peace. Accountability is the only path towards it.

I thank you.



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